

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00 OMB-01
AID-05 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 HA-05 IO-13
/076 W

-----098502 131843Z /72

O R 131747Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8241
INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 QUITO 3238

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, EC

REF: QUITO 3237

1. SUMMARY. GALO PLAZA BELIEVES THAT THE GOE'S DISQUALIFICATION OF OSWALDO HURTADO AND OTHER CANDIDATES IN THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN ENTIRELY LEGAL AND WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF ACCEPTED DEMOCRATIC POLITICS. HE BELIEVES ALL SECTORS OF THE ECUADOREAN ELECTORATE ARE WELL AND ABLY REPRESENTED IN THE ELECTION, AND THAT ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD AS SCHEDULED. HE CAUTIONED AGAINST TOO MUCH EXPRESSION OF CONCERN BY THE USG ABOUT THE DETAILS OF THE RETURN PROCESS, WHICH HE VIEWS AS FUNDAMENTALLY FREE AND OPEN, AND HE WARNED THAT THE RISK OF USG STATEMENTS (EVEN PRIVATE ONES) BEING MISINTERPRETED AS INTERVENTION ARE GREATER THAN ANY GAINS THE USG MIGHT MAKE IN CORRECTING SLIGHT DEFECTS IN THE RETURN PROCESS. HE BELIEVES A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IN ECUADOR WILL GIVE A VERY POSITIVE BOOST TO DEMOCRATIC FORCES THROUGHOUT THE HEMISPHERE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CHARGE TALKED WITH HIS NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR, GALO PLAZA (FORMER ECUADOREAN PRESIDENT AND OAS
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SECRETARY GENERAL), ON THE EVENING OF MAY 12 AFTER THE SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL (SET) ANNOUNCED ITS DECISION TO MAINTAIN ITS EARLIER DISQUALIFICATION OF THE POPULAR DEMOCRACY PARTY (DP - A FUSION OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND THE PROGRESSIVE COMSERVATIVES) AND THE POPULAR DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (MPD -- A PEKING-LINE COMMUNIST GROUP). THIS DECISION FOLLOWED PREVIOUS DECISIONS

OF THE GOE TO BAR ASSAD BUCARAM BECAUSE HIS PARENTS WERE NOT NATIVE BORN ECUADOREAN CITIZENS AND FRANCISCO HUERTA MONTALVO BECAUSE OF HIS ROLE IN THE FEDESSAROLLO SCANDAL.

3. FORMER PRESIDENT PLAZA STATED VERY EMPHATICALLY THAT THE GOE HAD DONE NOTHING WRONG OR ILLEGAL IN ANY OF THESE CASES WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ASSAD BUCARAM. HE STATED THAT THE GOE'S DISQUALIFICATION OF BUCARAM WAS STUPID BECAUSE HIS FOLLOWING HAD FADED GREATLY OVER THE PAST SIX YEARS AND HE WOULD HAVE BEEN BEATEN AT THE POLLS. THIS, PLAZA STATED, WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY HEALTHY FOR THE FUTURE OF THE ECUADOREAN POLITICAL SYSTEM. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT BUCARAM'S CONSTITUENCY IS STILL PARTICIPATING FULLY IN THE ELECTION PROCESS WITH JAIME ROLDOS AS THEIR CANDIDATE.

4. PLAZA CHARACTERIZED PANCHO HUERTA AS ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE AND TALENTED YOUNG POLITICIANS ON THE ECUADOREAN SCENE, AND LAMENTED THAT HIS FOOLISH AND ILLEGAL INVOLVEMENT IN A CONTRACT WITH THE GOVERNMENT HAD FORCED HIS DISQUALIFICATION. WITH RESPECT TO OSWALDO HURTADO, GALO PLAZA AGAIN SAID THAT THE CASE WAS VERY CLEAR-- HURTADO HAD NOT MET THE REQUISITES OF THE LAW. WHEN THE CHARGE POINTED OUT THAT THE LAW HAD BEEN CHANGED BY DECREE OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND COULD HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PERMIT QUALIFICATION OF THE DP, PLAZA RE-
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SPONDED THAT THE CHANGES MADE BY DECREE HAD LIBERALIZED LEGAL CONDITIONS AND EVEN SO THE DP HAD BEEN UNABLE TO FULFILL THE REQUIREMENTS.

5. PLAZA ASSERTED THAT ECAUDOR, DESPITE ITS HISTORICAL PROBLEMS WITH MILITARY DICTATORSHIP, IS UNIQUE IN LATIN AMERICA AND IS FUNDAMENTALLY DEMOCRATIC. HE MADE COMPARISON OF THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, TOLERANCE AND ABILITY OF PEOPLE TO PURSUE THEIR POLITICAL GOALS IN ECUADOR WITH MEXICO, WHOSE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS HE NOTED IS NOT QUESTIONED OFFICIALLY BY THE USG; AND HE ARGUED THAT ECUADOR IS FAR MORE DEMOCRATIC, EVEN UNDER A MILITARY GOVERNMENT. HE STATED THAT ALL SECTORS OF THE POPULATION IN ECUADOR ARE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN THE CAMPAIGN AND THAT THE ELECTIONS WILL TAKE PLACE AS PLEDGED BY THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT.

6. MENTIONING THE DP SPECIFICALLY, HE SAID THE DP CAN STILL SUPPORT THE CFP PROGRAM WHICH IT HAS ALREADY ENDORSED; AND IF HURTADO SHOULD CHOSE TO AFFILIATE WITH THE CFP AND CONTINUE AS ROLDOS' RUNNING MATE, HE CAN DO SO. ECUADOREANS WILL RECOGNIZE THAT HE IS STILL A

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT WHO HAS MERELY ADOPTED THE CFP LABEL
OUT OF POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY.

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AID-05 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 HA-05 IO-13
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 QUITO 3238

7. PLAZA SUGGESTED THAT THE USG WAS PROBABLY ATTRIBUTING TO THE MILITARY FAR GREATER CAPACITY TO MANIPULATE THE POLITICAL PROCESS THAN IT IN FACT POSSESSES. THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP, HE SAID, IS NOT THAT ASTUTE POLITICALLY, IS NOT UNITED, AND HAS ONLY MINIMAL CONTROL AND INFLUENCE OVER CIVILIAN POLITICAL LEADERS OF NATIONAL STATURE. HE STRESSED REPEATEDLY THAT THE GOE HAD DONE NOTHING ILLEGAL IN THE DISQUALIFICATION OF CANDIDATES, AND LECTURED THAT THE ESSENCE OF POLITICS IS "THE EXERCISE OF INFLUENCE AND MANIPULATION WITHIN ACCEPTED BOUNDS." HE SAID THAT EVER SINCE CHILE THAT LATIN AMERICANS SEE THE CIA EVERYWHERE AND THAT THE RISKS TO THE USG OF TOO MANY OFFICIAL EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST AND CONCERN ABOUT ECUADOR'S ELECTION PROCESS ARE PROBABLY GREATER THAN ANY EFFECT THEY MIGHT HAVE IN REMOVING SOME OF THE SLIGHT DEFECTS IN THE PROCESS, WHICH IS FUNDAMENTALLY DEMOCRATIC.

8. THE FORMER PRESIDENT'S OWN VIEWS ON THE ELECTION PROSPECTS OF THE LEADING CANDIDATES WAS OF INTEREST. RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA RENDON DOES NOT HAVE A CHANCE, ACCORD-INT TO PLAZA. HIS PARTY IS DIVIDED. HUERTA HIMSELF IS TOO LATE--HE IS TOO OLD PHYSICALLY AND HIS IDEOLOGY IS OUT OF DATE (MORE CONSERVATIVE THAN THAT OF SIXTO). MOREOVER, HUERTA IS NOT WELL AND HIS WIFE IS SERIOUSLY
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ILL. HE HAS NEVER BEEN THE MANAGER OF A LARGE ORGANIZATION AND HIS ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS ARE UNTESTED. HE IS A VERY NICE, HONEST AND DECENT MAN BUT WITH ALL HE MUST OVERCOME AND WITH THE ELECTIONS ONLY TWO MONTHS AWAY HE DOES NOT HAVE A CHANCE.

9. SIXTO DURAN IS STILL THE FRONTRUNNER. BOTH ROLDOS AND RODRIGO BORJA WILL PROBABLY FINISH AHEAD OF HUERTA RENDON, AND IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WHICH OF THE TWO WILL FINISH SECOND. BOTH ARE HONEST, ATTRACTIVE AND CAPABLE. BORJA HAS STRONG SUPPORT AMONG THE YOUNG MIDDLE CLASS BUT NO "TROOPS" IN THE LOWER CLASS. PLAZA'S CHILDREN ARE FOR BORJA. ROLDOS HAS SUPPORT IN THE LOWER CLASSES BUT IS STILL FEARED BY THE "ESTABLISHMENT."

10. PLAZA BELIEVES SIXTO DURAN, RAUL CLEMENTE RENDON, JAIME ROLDOS AND RODRIGO BORJA ARE CAPABLE MEN AND REPRESENT ALL SECTORS OF THE ECUADOREAN ELECTORATE, EXCEPT FOR THE SMALL MARXIST LEFT WHICH IS REPRESENTED BY MAUGE, THE CANDIDATE OF MOSCOW ORIENTED COMMUNIST GROUPS.

11. GALO PLAZA EMPHASIZED FINALLY THAT THE ELECTIONS HERE HAVE AN IMPORTANCE THAT EXTENDS BEYOND ECUADOR'S BOUNDARIES. HE IS CONVINCED THAT THE RETURN TO CIVILIAN AND CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT IN ECUADOR WILL STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC FORCES THROUGHOUT LATIN AMERICA.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION LAW, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, ELECTION CANDIDATES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978QUITO03238
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780204-0132
Format: TEL
From: QUITO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780561/aaaabzov.tel
Line Count: 200
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 6019969f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 QUITO 3237
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2698786
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DISQUALIFICATION OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE
TAGS: PINT, EC, (HURTADO, OSVALDO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6019969f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014